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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA AND USOAS

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SUBJECT: SOME NATIONALISTIC REACTION TO MINUSTAH'S RECENT OPERATIONS

REF: PAP 766

11. (SBU) Summary: Following an initially muted reaction, there has been more notable political commentary on the actions undertaken by MINUSTAH to take back police stations from ex-FADH elements (reftel). The few laudatory statements have been drowned out by nationalistic critiques of MINUSTAH's long over-due actions. While most of this rhetoric can be waved off as grandstanding by some personalities within the political class, it also points towards an emerging nationalistic tone in Haiti. MINUSTAH needs to quickly and decisively respond to threats from both the armed rebels and pro-Aristide criminal/political gangs. End Summary.

12. (SBU) After an initially muted reaction following MINUSTAH's military action to take back police stations from ex-FADH elements in Petit-Goave and Terre Rouge, the political class has started to comment on the action where two peacekeepers and several Haitians died. A few leaders have come out strongly in support of MINUSTAH and credit their actions as necessary to increase levels of security as Haitians proceed towards elections later this year. G-184 leader and Executive Director of the Civil Society Initiative (ISC) Rosny Desroches applauded MINUSTAH's action and said it was long-overdue. He called for the international peacekeepers to further step in where the Haitian National Police (HNP) has been unable to do so.

13. (U) Desroches' comments have been drowned out by a more nationalistic chorus. Dr. Turneb Delpe, former senator and Secretary General of the National Democratic Progressive

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Party (PNDPH), was critical of MINUSTAH's operations calling them the result of the Interim Government's failure to properly handle the demands of the ex-military. Victor Benoit, speaking on behalf of the Social Democrats, said he did not approve of MINUSTAH's actions in Petit-Goave and that "Lavalas bandits" were more of a threat than the former military. A spokesperson for Evans Paul's KID party, Andre Michel, also criticized the IGOH and urged it to meet the ex-military's demands. Michel, however, simultaneously called on the ex-military to respect the "law, order and institutions" of Haiti.

14. (U) A vice-mayor in Petit-Goave, Montigene Sincere, criticized what he deemed heavy-handed actions by MINUSTAH to dislodge the ex-military from the local police station. Sincere said that he supported the ex-military's presence and claimed they provided much-needed security against banditry. Monsignor Guire Poulard, the outspoken bishop from nearby Jacmel, said MINUSTAH used "guerrilla tactics" to retake the police station. Lukmane Delile, coordinator of the National Association of Haitian Students, also believed MINUSTAH's use of force was overzealous.

15. (U) Joseph Lucien, vice-president of the largest student organization (Federation of Haitian University Students, FEUH) condemned MINUSTAH's actions and said the peacekeepers did not respect the Haitian constitution. Lucien encouraged the IGOH to respond to MINUSTAH's actions (Note: Interim Prime Minister Latortue has publicly acknowledged he "gave the order for MINUSTAH to retake the police stations from those bandits." End Note). Nellus Laurent of the recently formed Jean Jacques Dessalines Center for Human Rights demanded the IGOH explain itself to the nation and said that the international presence must leave soon.

16. (SBU) The most vitriolic statement was a press release from the Center Right Front/Mobilization for National Development's (GFCD/MDN) Hubert DeRonceray. Petit-Goave is a GFCD/MDN stronghold and DeRonceray has long been sympathetic to reconstitution of the FADH. Within the press release text, DeRonceray lambasted the IGOH as being a prisoner to the "extreme left" and called MINUSTAH a "force of war" whose actions "benefit the socio-communists" (referring to OPL and the Social Democrats). In a March 22 radio broadcast, while sounding a generally more measured tone, called the event "a crime."

17. (SBU) Comment: Most of this rhetoric can be waved off as grandstanding by some personalities within the political class, however, an underlying nationalistic tone is increasingly present in Haiti. For the first several months of their deployment here, most Haitians complained MINUSTAH was "on vacation," but after two days of pro-active engagement, Haitians are criticizing the peacekeepers as over-aggressive. More worrisome is the reported call from Hinche's ex-FADH leader Jean-Baptiste, telling his men to take off their uniforms and wage a guerrilla war against MINUSTAH. MINUSTAH needs to quickly and decisively respond to the likes of Jean-Baptiste and Ravix to ensure a secure environment as the country prepares for the voter registration process, the first step towards holding successful elections later this year. MINUSTAH also needs to take decisive action against the pro-Aristide gangs, particularly in Port-au-Prince, for all the obvious reasons, but also to protect itself from charges of bias. End comment.
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